

Declaration on national machineries, gender equality and ICT

adopted by

Participants at the regional meeting on “Strengthening the capacity of national machineries through the effective use of ICTs” Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 28 to 30 September 2005

We, the participants, representing national machineries for gender equality and the advancement of women and ICT policy-makers, at the African regional meeting on “Strengthening the Capacity of National Machineries through the Effective Use of ICT”, held in Addis Ababa from 28-30 September 2005;

Recalling the Plan of Action, adopted at the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva in 2003, which affirmed that development of ICT provides enormous opportunities for women, who should be an integral part of, and key actors in, the Information Society, and in which Governments committed to ensuring that the Information Society enables women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society and in all decision-making processes, and also committed to mainstreaming a gender equality perspective and using ICT as a tool to that end.

Recalling also the recommendations of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the outcome document adopted at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000), on the potential of the media and information and communication technologies to contribute to the advancement and empowerment of women, and *further recalling* the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000) which resolved to ensure that the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication technologies, are available to all;

Further recalling the commitments to gender equality and ICT made by the Commission on the Status of Women in its Agreed Conclusions on “Participation and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women”, adopted at its forty-seventh session in March 2003, including on strengthening the capacity of national machineries, inter alia through the allocation of adequate and appropriate resources and the provision of technical expertise, to ensure a lead advocacy role and their involvement in national, regional and international processes;

Reaffirming the commitment made in the outcome of the preparatory Africa Regional Conference, held in Accra, Ghana, from 2 to 4 February 2005, to take collective action on integrating gender perspectives into the information and shared knowledge society in general and ICT in particular, as well as the Declaration adopted at the preparatory Africa Regional Meeting, held in Bamako, Mali from 28 to 30 May 2002, which emphasized the

need to ensure better gender balance in ICT use while instituting specific programmes that address the needs of women particularly those aimed at rural and disenfranchised areas;

Reaffirming also the existing regional and global ICT frameworks, such as the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) and the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (2003);

Recognizing that the current use of information and communication technologies reflects existing gender inequalities and has the potential to address and reduce these inequalities or further entrench and exacerbate them;

1. *Commit* to using appropriate ICT to achieve the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and make strategic decisions to collectively strengthen the capacity of African national machineries to address the gender digital divide, and urge other government bodies to support this work;
3. *Further commit* to develop and implement effective mechanisms to address the challenges faced, including in relation to costs and budget allocations, access, and skills and capacity, in order to strategically use ICT as effective tools for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women;
4. *Undertake* to fully implement the Strategic Framework for Further Action, and to effectively utilize the regional e-network established collaboratively at this meeting;
5. *Call on* African Governments, international and regional organizations and donors, civil society, and other actors, as appropriate, to take action to address the gender digital divide, as reflected in women's limited access and use of ICT and low levels of participation in the development of technology design and in digital content, and to support the role of national machineries for the advancement of women in this respect, by:
 - a) *Strengthening* the collaboration between national machineries and ICT policy makers as a means to increase gender mainstreaming in ICT policies and programmes in all sectors and at all levels;
 - b) *Empowering* national machineries to support gender mainstreaming in ICT policies and programmes, and to use ICT strategically in all areas of their work, by providing technical expertise and appropriate human and financial adequate resources;
 - c) *Involving* national machineries in all ICT policy-making processes at national, regional and international levels;
 - d) *Facilitating* collaboration and coordination among national machineries, civil society organizations, ministries responsible for ICT policy making and implementation, and all other actors, in the gender-sensitive use of ICT for development;

- e) *Ensuring* regulatory bodies explicitly address gender concerns in relation to in the ownership, control and management of the ICT sector and promote the full participation of women;
- f) *Allocating* sufficient resources to develop appropriate ICT content that reflects the values, diversity of languages and local contexts and ensure that women's voices, issues and concerns are articulated;
- g) *Ensuring* the active engagement of national machineries in the national level implementation and the follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005);
- h) *Undertaking* appropriate measures to eradicate the misuse of ICT which perpetuates violence against women and girls and trafficking in women and girls, and stereotypical, harmful portrayal of women and girls;
- i) *Supporting* implementation of the Strategic Framework for Future Action on gender equality and ICT, adopted at this meeting;
- j) *Supporting* the establishment of the regional e-network of African national machineries for gender equality and the advancement of women, to further promote gender equality in the information society.